



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
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May 8, 2002

TO: Washington State Board of Health
FROM: Carl Osaki, WSBOH Member
RE: Follow up on School Indoor Air Quality

Summary:

On March 13, 2002 the Board heard an update from the Department of Health on its Indoor Air Quality Program and activities in response to school indoor air quality (IAQ) complaints. The Board received information, recommendations, and testimony from parents, teachers, and students concerned about school IAQ issues (see attached Summary of School IAQ Recommendations). Today you will hear another update from Department of Health on school indoor air quality activities, and additional public testimony from concerned parents, students, and teachers.

The Board directed staff to research California legislation related to IAQ issues and other states' activities. The Board also directed Board staff to work with the Department of Health (DOH), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and other interested parties to begin developing recommendations on policy options for Board discussion.

In response to Board direction, Board staff and I met on April 25, 2002 with representatives from DOH, OPSI, Washington Department of Labor and Industries, Public Health-Seattle & King County, Kittitas County Health Department, Washington State Environmental Health Association, and citizens. It was decided that an already existing group, the Healthy Schools Task Force, might be the appropriate group to develop and recommend policy options to the Board.

At the April 30, 2002 Healthy Schools Task Force meeting, task force members agreed that one of their possible goals would be to develop and recommend policy options. The task force currently expects that a draft summary document, including policy recommendations, will be available this fall and presented to the Board when completed. Members of the Healthy Schools Task Force represent many of the stakeholders able to make comprehensive recommendations to the Board, but not all. Additional stakeholders will be consulted and their perspectives included in recommendations brought to the Board. (Please see attached list of Healthy Schools Task Force members.)

Background:

School IAQ has been a recurring topic during Board meetings over the last eight years. On March 13, 2002 the Board received school IAQ recommendations and information, including a Cle Elum teacher's medical records; letters from students, teachers, and parents; a chronology of IAQ-related events at Cle Elum High School; Cle Elum High School staff questionnaire results; a Clean Air Now petition signed by 642 people requesting IAQ testing and remediation; a letter from Nancy Goodloe, Kittitas County Health Department Administrator; and an article by Harriet Ammann on IAQ sampling. The Board also received extensive testimony by fax and heard during public testimony from parents, teachers, and students concerned about how school IAQ complaints are handled by local and state agencies, and the impacts of school IAQ problems on the health of students and teachers.

School IAQ issues have increasingly been the subject of television and newspaper stories, legislation, and research reports, nationwide. Legislation regarding school IAQ issues has been proposed and/or adopted in Washington and at least 10 other states.

California recently passed three bills, including SB 732 which establishes a task force to advise the California Department of Health Services on the development of permissible exposure limits to mold; standards for assessment of molds in indoor environments; alternative standards for hospitals, child care facilities, and nursing homes; and standards for identification and remediation of mold. (The 13-page bill is available at http://info.sen.ca.gov/pub/bill/sen/sb_0701-0750/sb_732_bill_20010913_enrolled.html)

Two useful reports on state IAQ policy have been published by the Environmental Law Institute (ELI). The "Healthier Schools: A Review of State Policies for Improving Indoor Air Quality" (ELI, 2002) contains a review of states' IAQ policies and programs, including a brief critique of Washington State's school inspection program and SBOH rules (WAC 246-366), along with four state policy approaches to promote better maintenance and management practices:

1. establishing traditional regulatory requirements;
2. providing information and training on good IAQ maintenance practices;
3. providing schools with funding and financial incentives;
4. strengthening the public right to know about IAQ in schools.

"State and Indoor Air Quality Programs: Five Case Studies" (ELI, 1997) describes efforts of state and local government agencies to protect IAQ and reduce associated health risks. Key features of IAQ programs described include interagency coordination, federal support, legislation, program resources, and stakeholder participation. (Both reports are available at www.eli.org.)

Recommended Board Motion:

No action recommended at this time. Schedule update from Healthy Schools Task Force on completion of their report. Board discussion and action anticipated following this update.

Attachments: Summary of School IAQ Recommendations
Healthy Schools Task Force Members list